

SYLLABUS

CTPR 533—ADVANCED DIRECTING TECHNIQUES

CREATING A VISUAL DESIGN THROUGH CAMERA MOVEMENT

Instructor: Michael Connors
Phone: (917) 566-7181
Email: mike@fivebyeight.com
Office Hours: By appointment.

Student Assistant: Edward Kim
Email: eddykim1@gmail.com

Course Prerequisite: CTPR 532
Semester: Fall 2014
Section: Wednesdays 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Class Hours: 3 hours
Location: RZC-114

Course Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this class is to further build upon the directing student's ability to analyze a scripted scene or sequence, develop a unique vision derived from thorough text analysis, then communicate his or her vision effectively to an audience through carefully designed camera movement and choreographed actor staging.

Throughout the course of the semester, students will gain practical experience in planning and choreographing camera and actor movement in both single, 'long take' scenes and edited moving camera 'sequence' scenes or 'long take master scenes' with necessary edited coverage.

Beginning with text analysis or 'detective work', directing students will investigate the subtext of their chosen scene and integrate actor staging with camera movement to produce work that clearly articulates the director's unique vision of the text.

We will explore 'subjective' versus 'objective' camera movement and how using both within the scene or sequence are essential to affecting the audience's emotional involvement in the material.

During the second portion of the course, directing students will learn the process of editing multiple camera movement shots into one coherent scene or sequence that furthers the director's visual design. We will also explore editing selected coverage into a 'long take master' shot to articulate important narrative beats within the scene.

Students will have the option to shoot several scenes or a sequence from their own work (a short or feature script) or they may choose to write a contained short piece no longer than six minutes integrating camera movement into their overall visual design.

The course will also touch on the history of camera movement, beginning with The Silent Era and ‘Golden Age’ of the Hollywood Studio System and trace how camera movement evolved with technology and progressed through the various movements in world cinema (Italian Neo-Realism, The French New Wave, the modern Hollywood Blockbuster and the evolution of CGI and special effects).

Production Requirements

The practical production portion of the class will consist of two filmed camera movement scenes or sequences, or a final contained short piece to be shot outside of class.

The first assigned exercise will be a single ‘long take’, no shorter than two minutes and no longer than four minutes, chosen from an unproduced student screenplay (short or feature) or from a selection of scenes provided by the instructor. Scenes provided by the instructor will range in genre (comedy, drama, suspense etc.)

Students will be broken down into two groups (A and B) to shoot their respective exercises on subsequent weekends.

When Group A is shooting, Group B is required to serve in the various crew positions (camera operator/DP, dolly grip if necessary, and sound).

Students will screen their scenes and sequences in class according to their assigned group. For the first exercise (the single ‘long take’) the student director will bring in all his or her ‘takes’ – from the chosen best or ‘circled take’ to all discarded or incomplete takes. We will examine the changes made to the actor staging and camera movement the director made during the process of shooting all his or her takes.

For the second exercise, students will shoot a moving camera sequence (a series of moving camera shots edited to create a continuous scene) or a single ‘long take master’ scene with necessary coverage to articulate important beats within the long take master. Students are required to edit the second scene or sequence outside of class and present the following week(s) after shooting for critique.

Students will also have the option to shoot a fully contained short piece no longer than six minutes that integrates camera movement into the overall design of the completed piece.

***NOTE:** Students wishing to shoot a completed short piece for their final exercise must get approval from the instructor and student assistant to ensure budget and production requirements do not exceed the scope of the course.*

During the classes prior to shooting, student directors from their respective groups will present their text analysis or ‘detective work’ in class along with completed overhead floor plans for their long take or sequence scene that demonstrate their camera movement and actor staging plan.

For the final project, to better understand their plan and overall design, students will then ‘put the scene/sequence on its feet’ by blocking and rehearsing it with the actors they have cast. Instructor and classmates will critique the rehearsals and shooting plan and the student director will make any necessary adjustments before shooting.

The practical aspects of working with a crew (cinematographer, camera operator, dolly grip and Steadicam operator) to accomplish more complex camera moves will be explored in class workshops conducted in Stage 1. The instructor will guide students through scenes shot during class (using the students as crew). The instructor and students will analyze the footage from in class demonstrations prior to breaking into crews and shooting their own scenes outside of class.

Student scenes must be cast with professional actors. The intent is to have the directing student conduct a comprehensive text analysis and effectively convey their vision to the actors during the rehearsal process in order to create truthful performances and a staging design that clearly articulates the director’s vision.

Additional Requirements

Reading assignments and clips from assigned films will be discussed in class and are documented on the course outline.

Class Philosophy and Goals

This class is about process. Production value is NOT the focus. As such, directing students should be concerned more about developing a unique methodology that works specifically for them – and less about the finished product (their two filmed scenes/sequences outside of class).

Participation is a must. Crewing on fellow student scenes provides the student the opportunity to experience various different methodologies for camera movement and staging in addition to their own efforts. In order to gain the most from in-class critiques, students should try to understand the process of their fellow students and what they are trying to accomplish with their scenes. Finally, you will learn more from your own mistakes and those of your fellow students than you will from your successes. Push yourself to make mistakes!

Goals

- Further understand how exhaustive text analysis informs a director’s visual design, staging and camera movement decisions within a scene.

- Understand the important relationship and integration between actor staging and camera movement and how the meaning of a scene changes with shifting camera perspectives.
- Understand and be able to execute subjective and objective camera movements through planned and choreographed camera movement.
- Understand and execute how multiple long takes or camera movement shots are edited together within a single scene or sequence.
- Explore the history of camera movement through the various periods in world cinema.
- Understand and experiment with the various technical ways to move the camera.

Recommended Texts

Film Directing Fundamentals, See Your Film Before Shooting, by Nicholas T. Proferes
The Art of Cinematic Motion by Steven Katz
Shot by Shot by Steven Katz
The Visual Story by Bruce Block (Second Edition)
Changing Direction by Lenore Dekovan
Kazan on Directing by Elia Kazan
On Directing by Harold Clurman

Assigned Readings

Mandatory readings assigned throughout the semester will be discussed in class and you may be quizzed on their contents.

Grading and Assignments

Single 'long take' scene	30%
Final sequence/short or long take master with coverage	40%
In class text analysis and overhead floor-plan presentations	15%
In class blocking rehearsals	15%

Note: students are required to bring hard copies of their scene, detective work and overhead floor plans for all members of the class on the day of their presentation.

Attendance/Absence policy

Credit towards your grade cannot – by University policy be given for simply being present. It is expected that you will attend class, and if you are unavoidably going to

miss class, instructor and SA must be notified of absence in advance by email. Justifications must be verifiable.

You will be permitted ONE excused absence. Beyond that, you will receive a reduction of 1/3 overall course grade per unexcused absence. SA will keep track of attendance.

LATE ARRIVALS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. As directing students, you must place yourself on ‘director’s time’ – which means always BE EARLY to set. You will be expected to arrive ten minutes prior to class so we can begin promptly at 7 PM. I understand that given the start time of class traffic will be an issue. So plan accordingly. I will give you one ‘warning’ and then I will assign penalties. SA will keep track of late arrivals.

The use of laptops is allowed for taking notes in class only and must be put away during all scene work and blocking rehearsals.

CELL PHONES MUST BE SHUT OFF DURING CLASS TIME.

Use of School Equipment

Students will be responsible for payment of insurance for usage of school equipment. You may request permission to use additional equipment. If permission is granted you will be required to obtain insurance for that equipment through Joe Wallenstein’s office. Students assigned to crews are obligated to work together. As the director, a student may elect to have someone other than a classmate function as the DP, however, they must utilize all members of their assigned crew. No director may DP their own scene or sequence.

All projects should be presented in-class on a DVD. A DVD must be left with the instructor. A DVD copy of the scene must be given to each cast member. All DVDs must be watermarked as a USC classroom exercise. SAG cast members must be reminded that they are allowed to post no more than thirty seconds of the material given to them onto the internet.

School provided cameras may be reserved in the SCA Equipment Room, and you must reserve the week in advance, as you must with the sound department and grip/lighting center.

Specific equipment for the class are as follows:

Camera: PD 170

Lighting: Grey 290 Light kits

Sound: 475 Mic Kit, 529 Mic Kit, AT Mic Kit (contains a shotgun mic, zeppelin, cables and mount) Boom pole, Desk stand, Wired lavaliers (no access to wireless however,

wireless mics can be rented from Location Sound or Coffey Sound), Sennheiser MKH 60 Mic Kit (contains a shotgun mic, zeppelin, cables and mount), 25' XLR Cables, Zoom Recorder Kit, 897 Mic Kit

Students may edit their projects in SCA post. We will be editing on the Avid Media Composer. Two students will be paired on a single drive. You may edit on your own equipment, but equipment failure will then not be an acceptable excuse for missed presentations.

Dollies: *The priority for the dollies is for students in 480/546 first. They reserve 10 days in advance and for most of their shooting season (the first 8 weeks) they take out all the tracks and dollies from Thursday to Tuesday. After 480/546, on the Monday of the week they check out, the 508 students take out dollies as well. They usually scoop up all the remaining dollies by 9am Monday. Those are for Thursday check out. So 533 students interested in checking out dollies need to be ready first thing Monday morning to get a chance at reserving them.*

Safety

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>

Weekly Outline:

(Subject to revision at the discretion of the Instructor based on class needs)

Week 1: (August 27th):

Course introduction. Text Analysis and Staging. The Director's Work on the Script.

- Course overview.
- History of camera movement.
- Evolution of technology through silent cinema, the Hollywood Studio system, European Art Cinema and through the digital age
- And Introduction to camera movement. Motivation. Subjective vs. Objective.
- Review the principles of text analysis.
- Developing a 'director's spine' or 'thru-line'.
- Creating 'dynamic relationships' between characters.
- Staging principles. Expressing 'dynamic relationships'. Screen clips from *'The Godfather'*, *'The Godfather Part II'* and *'The Graduate'*.

In class staging and workshop. Instructor will guide students through an in-class staging exercise. Students will break down a scene and rehearse a basic blocking plan, students will serve as actors for the purpose of the scene.

Homework/Assignments:

Finish reading instructor handouts from Proferes, Kazan and Dekovan on text analysis and staging. Chapter 7: *'Movement'*, *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block. Review scene handout for week 2 exercise.

Week 2: (September 3rd)

Objective versus Subjective Camera Movement.

- Continuation of character motivation and the subjective vs. objective camera
- Designing floor plans for integrating actor and camera movement
- Framing the performance
- **Block, Rehearse, Light and Shoot**
- The impact of lens choice and focal length on camera movement
- Staging and camera movement inside and outside of the 'line of action'
- Creating an overall visual design for a scene

Screen and discuss selected scenes and sequences from *'Mean Streets'*, *'Boogie Nights'*, *'Notorious'*, *'Children of Men'*, *'8 ½'* and *'The Godfather'*.

In class actor/camera movement workshop: Building upon the previous weeks scene, the instructor will now guide students through the addition of the moving camera to the scene. Students will learn the process of designing a dolly shot, on track, to best serve

the dramatic intent of the scene as provided by the text analysis done in the previous class. Students once again will serve as actors for the purposes of this exercise.

Homework/Assignments:

Students will conduct their own text analysis of the selected scene that will be staged in class the following week by the instructor with professional actors.

Week 3: (September 10th)

Integrating Actor Staging and Camera Movement

Putting it all together. In class camera movement practicum: ‘the long take’.

Instructor will guide students through the staging and shooting of a selected scene in one single, ‘long take’ with professional actors. We will begin by conducting text analysis of a scene provided by the instructor. Next, we will block and rehearse the scene with professional actors provided by the instructor, then shoot the scene in a single ‘long take’. The class will then critique each take in the series and discuss chosen take(s) in relationship to the original shooting plan and director’s text analysis.

Homework/Assignments:

The class will be broken down into ‘Group A’ and ‘Group B’ and scenes will be assigned for the first production exercise: ‘the long take’.

Students may select a scene from one their own unproduced screenplays (feature or short) or chose one of the scenes provided by the instructor. Instructor will provide several options based on genre (comedy, drama, suspense etc.)

(NOTE: Instructor must approve scenes from student written scripts so they are suitable for the long take exercise – scenes must be no shorter than 2 pages and no longer than 4 pages).

Group A Students will present text analysis/director’s detective work and ‘long take’ floor plans in Week 5. Students are required to bring in copies of their script, text analysis and floor-plans for the entire class.

Week 4: (September 17th)

Group A ‘Long Take’ Presentations.

Group A students present their text analysis and overhead floor-plans for their ‘long take’ scenes. Their presentations (time permitting) will culminate with a director’s walk through or rehearsal of the scene using classmates as actors to replicate the staging design.

Homework/Assignments:

Group A students will shoot their ‘long take’ scenes (with professional actors) with Group B students serving as assigned crew positions. DUE IN WEEK 6.

Week 5: (September 24th)

Group B ‘long take’ Presentations.

Group B students present their text analysis and overhead floor-plans for their long take scenes. Their presentations (time permitting) will culminate with a director’s walk through or rehearsal of the scene using classmates as actors to replicate the staging design.

Homework/Assignments:

Group B students will shoot their ‘long take’ scenes (with professional actors) with Group A students serving as assigned crew positions. DUE IN WEEK 7.

Week 6: (October 1st)

Screen and critique Group A ‘long takes’.

Group A Students will present all recorded ‘takes’ in the order they were shot (or a selection based on the number and time permitting). Analysis will focus on accomplishing the student director’s vision for the scene based on the text analysis and floor-plan discussed in week 5. Critique will also focus on the evolution of the series of takes and changes made to staging and camera moves during shooting, culminating with the director’s preferred take(s).

Week 7: (October 8th):

Screen and critique Group B ‘long takes’

Group B Students will present all recorded ‘takes’ in the order they were shot (or a selection based on the number and time permitting). Analysis will focus on accomplishing the student director’s vision for the scene based on the text analysis and floor-plan discussed in week 6. Critique will also focus on the evolution of the series of takes and changes made to staging and camera movement during shooting, culminating with the director’s preferred take(s).

Homework/Assignments:

Scripts and visual design for final exercise. DUE IN WEEK 9 (MARCH 13th).

Group A students will present their script, detective work and overall camera movement and staging design for their final project.

Students have the choice to either shoot a camera movement sequence (a series of camera movement shots or brief scenes) or a single, ‘long take master’ scene with the necessary edited coverage to articulate important narrative beats.

Scenes/sequences will be no shorter than 4 pages and no longer than 6 pages.

Students will also have the option to shoot a contained short piece no longer than 6 pages (and no shorter than 4 pages) utilizing moving camera scenes/sequences that are part of the overall film's visual design.

As stated previously, students wishing to shoot a completed short must get approval from the instructor in order to ensure production requirements do not exceed what can be accomplished in the class.

Scenes or sequences can be taken from an unproduced student screenplay, short or feature (either their own or a fellow student's), or chosen from several options given by the instructor. As with the first exercise, the instructor will present different options according to genre (comedy, drama, suspense etc.)

Group A students are required to email their script and detective work to the class no later than Sunday, March 9th so students are familiar with the text before the class presentations on Thursday. Group A students will then present detective work and take the class through their floor plans and overall camera movement design for their final sequence or contained short piece.

Group B students will present in Week 11 (March 27th) and must email their scripts and detective work to the rest of class no later than March 23rd.

Week 8: (October 15th)

The camera movement sequence and the 'long take master' with coverage

- Editing several long takes or continuous camera movement shots into a continuous scene
- Screen direction and camera movement
- The long take master with coverage.
- Designing 'cut points' within the long take master
- Staging to 'cut points'

Long take master with coverage practicum. The instructor will guide students through the staging and shooting of a long take master scene with necessary coverage. The scene will be blocked and proper coverage and cut points will be pre-visualized and staged to ensure a smooth editing option for the scene. Students will serve as actors and crew for the demonstration.

Homework/Assignments:

REMINDER:

Group A final project presentations due in Week 9 (March 13th).

Group B final project presentations due in Week 11 (March 27th).

Week 9: (October 22nd)

Group A final project visual presentations.

Homework/Assignments:

REMINDER: Group B Presentations Week 11 (March 27th).

CASTING AND PRE-PRODUCTION FOR FINAL PROJECTS.

Begin casting final projects for in class rehearsals.

Group A – Week 12 (April 3rd)

Group B – Week 13 (April 10th)

Week 10: (October 29th)

Group B final project visual presentations.

Homework/Assignments:

CASTING AND PREPRODUCTION FOR FINAL PROJECTS.

Begin casting final projects for in class rehearsals.

Group A – Week 12 (April 3rd)

Group B – Week 13 (April 10th)

Week 11: (November 5th)

Group A final project rehearsals.

Group A students will bring in their actors and rehearse their final scenes/sequences. Students shooting a contained short will bring in selected scenes or sequences from the short to rehearse as discussed in the previous weeks presentations.

Homework/Assignments:

Group A – SHOOT! (Final Screening and Critique May 1st).

Group B – Rehearsals April 10th.

Week 12: (November 12th)

Group B students will bring in their actors and rehearse their final scenes/sequences. Students shooting a contained short will bring in selected scenes or sequences from the short to rehearse as discussed in the previous weeks presentations.

Homework/Assignments:

Group A – SHOOT! (Final Screening and Critique May 1st).

Group B – Rehearsals April 10th.

Week 13: (November 19th)

*The make-up class. This class is intended for extra rehearsal time if needed due to actor conflicts. **NOTE.** Students are required to bring in their actors during their assigned times and will be penalized if they bring in their actors during this class.*

However, because the class is about process, I will afford students the opportunity to catch up during this class and rehearse with instructor and class critique if their actors were unavailable during the previous weeks.

*If everyone does present during their assigned time this class will be dedicated to either a guest speaker or a shot by shot breakdown of **THE WHITE RIBBON** (in a screening room).*

Homework/Assignments:

Group A & B: SHOOT AND EDIT!

Week 14: (November 26th)

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15: (December 3rd)

GROUP A FINAL SCREENING!

We will be showing in a screening room (most likely the Ron Howard Theater in RZC).

Students will be presenting their final sequence, ‘long take master scene’ with coverage or contained camera movement short. Analysis will focus on accomplishing the student director’s vision for the scene based on the text analysis and floor-plan that is then further developed in rehearsal. Critique will also focus on the smooth editing of multiple camera movement shots, uses of screen direction, framing and ‘line of action’. Additionally, students choosing to shoot a long take master with coverage will discuss their chosen use of coverage shots edited into the long take and why those specific narrative beats in the scene warranted the chosen coverage.

Week 16: (December 10th)

GROUP B FINAL SCREENING!

We will be showing in a screening room (most likely the Ron Howard Theater in RZC).

Students will be presenting their final sequence, ‘long take master scene’ with coverage or contained camera movement short. Analysis will focus on accomplishing the student director’s vision for the scene based on the text analysis and floor-plan that is then further developed in rehearsal. Critique will also focus on the smooth editing of multiple camera movement shots, uses of screen direction, framing and ‘line of action’. Additionally,

SYLLABUS CTPR 533 – Creating a Visual Design Through Camera Movement

students choosing to shoot a long take master with coverage will discuss their chosen use of coverage shots edited into the long take and why those specific narrative beats in the scene warranted the chosen coverage.

END OF CLASS.